Older Persons. Under the scheme of 'An Integrated Programme for Older Persons', financial assistance is provided to voluntary organisations for establishing and maintaining Old Age Homes, Day Care Centres and Mobile Medicare Units etc. The other scheme mentioned above aims at providing one time financial grant for construction of old age homes or multi-service centres. Under the scheme mentioned at (i) above, financial assistance is being given to a voluntary organiation in Himachal Pradesh for running a Day Care Centre and a Mobile Medicare Unit for Older Persons.

(c) and (d) No, Sir, However, a National Council for Older Persons has already been established under the Chairmanship of the Minster of State for Social Justice and Empowermnet to operationalize the National Policy on Older Persons.

Abolition of Devdasi Tradition

†1920. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Devdasi tradition which is continuously prevailing in the Indian society since long has become synonymous with flesh trade;

(b) the names of the States where this evil practice is prevalent;

(c) whether poverty, starvation, unemployment and illiteracy are the root cause of this tradition; and

(e) if so, the role of Government in protecting the human rights and abolishing this evil tradition which has continued to exist in the name of religion?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) and (b) The Devdasi system which was prevalent in some parts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtara has been legally banned. Despite this, there are some reports that dedication in the name of God still continues, clandestinely, on a smaller scale. In earlier times when social bonds and practices were stronger, the system found its own means of sustaining such dedicated

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

women, but in recent times, there have been complaints that such dedicated women also indulge in prostitution to sustain themselves.

(c) and (d) The customary practice of dedication has been the phyenomenon of poverty particularly amoung the Scheduled Castes and backward classes to some extent. Lack of literacy and of control or access over productive resource (economic) has enfeebled such families and they continue to dedicate girls.

(e) The State Governments of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharasthra have enacted laws for the prohibition of Devdasi system. The commercial aspect of this practice attracts provisions of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956. This supplements the substantive laws against Kidnepping, sale, abduction and wrongful detention of women and girls. Besides, these State Governments have initiated various economic rehabilitation measures.

15-Point Programme for Minorities in M.P.

† 1921. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken or propose to take any action for strengthening the 15-point programme for the welfare of minorities in Madhya Pradesh; and

(b) if so, the details of action taken by Government to implement the programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) The 15-Point Programme for the welfare of minorities in the country including minorities in Madhya Pradesh, is under revision.

(b) The implementation of the programme is done by the State Government/Union Territory Administrations and is closely monitored by the Central Government on the basis of the half yearly progress reports received from the State/UTs.

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.